Colchester Board of Education
Communication received:

Christine McNichols Foley

Dear Board of Selectmen and Board of Education Members,

I am writing to you today as a resident of Colchester. My husband and I are both graduates of Bacon Academy and we are the parents of 4 children who have all been in the town of Colchester since their birth. Our oldest two graduated from Bacon Academy in 2020. We also have a junior at Bacon and another child in 2nd grade.
All four of our children have dedicated countless hours on the fields in town, choosing to spend their time doing what they love. I'm writing to share my profound disappointment in the state of Colchester's athletic fields and to strongly request you consider investing in Colchester's youth and student athletes.

As you must be aware, Colchester is one of the only towns with its own high school in the state to not have a turf field anywhere in town. The field we do have at the high school, as well as the fields at the rec plex, are often deemed unsafe and entirely unplayable. When I attended Bacon Academy in the early 90's, we began fundraising so that we could one day have a football team. Thankfully, we now have that football team as well as many other amazing team sports with a large group of dedicated young players. Yet almost 30 years later, we still have substandard fields and our practice time depends on the sunset with no available lighting at our high school fields.

Our high school teams have often been forced to practice in the gym more often than outside. Of course, sports meant to be played outside cannot effectively be practiced in a gymnasium. This is a huge disadvantage and disheartening to our young players who need the practice to be competitive and successful against surrounding towns.

This past week, the boys lacrosse team practiced outside on the unlined field on Monday. On Tuesday, we won an away game. On Wednesday, we were forced to practice in the gym for just one hour. On Thursday, we played a home game. The varsity won, however, due to some rain, the JV game was called off just after half time because the referees deemed the field UNPLAYABLE and a HUGE SAFETY HAZARD to our student athletes. On Friday, it was 65 degrees and sunny in Colchester. A beautiful day. The fields were deemed "unplayable." We practiced inside, again, for one hour in the gym. Saturday, the varsity and JV games scheduled to be played by the boys lacrosse teams, at home, were canceled, due to field conditions. And here we are again, Tuesday, April 12, 2022 a home game was scheduled. It was a beautiful afternoon, and our games are yet again cancelled due to field conditions.

These players, who devote countless hours to their sport, deserve a SAFE playing field. At what point is it realized that the children of our town are at a disadvantage compared to other surrounding towns. How are our coaches expected to create and promote competitive programs for these young kids when they don't even have a safe field to play on?

Our players are dedicated to their sports. They put in the time. As parents, we PAY for them to play. Our money should be used to improve these conditions so that our athletes can play their very best. What about the field maintenance fee that each player pays for recreation leagues? What about the admission of $5 per person that is charged for each home Bacon Academy football game? Those funds should be used more efficiently. With some quick math, our family alone has spent over $650 to watch our own boys play football over the years. OVER $650, just for admission to the games! That large sum is in addition to our pay to play fees, in addition to our yearly taxes paid and in additional to any necessary equipment. Now imagine how many other families have attended every home game for years, all of the fees for guests from the opposing teams and what that collective amount is….. We certainly could have invested that money directly back to our fields. They deserve better. We all deserve better.

This community needs a turf field and lighting at the high school. It will benefit generations of Colchester children.

Surely if so many other Connecticut towns can do it, we can, too. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Christine McNichols Foley

Kevin Burke
BA Athletic Director

Hello All, I just wanted you to hear the news from me first. I have resigned from the position of Athletic Director effective June 21st. It has been my pleasure to be the AD at BA for the last 16 years. I truly do enjoy the position. I have made many friends and formed relationships that I will cherish for years to come. As you know the demands and hours of the position of AD require a tremendous amount of time and dedication. The stipend no longer equals the amount of time and work. There are more details in the letter below. No need for calls, emails or text messages. When you see me we can talk. Thank you for your support in my role as AD for BA Athletics. I will continue to teach at BA and be here to support BA
Athletics.

Kevin

Brian Martin
BA Lacrosse Coach

Dear Board of Selectmen and Board of Education Members,

As the head lacrosse coach of Bacon Academy's boys' lacrosse team, as well as vice president of Colchester Youth Lacrosse, head coach of Colchester recreation boys U10 lacrosse, head coach of boys U10 Colchester travel soccer, a resident of Colchester since 2009 and a father to three children who participate in Colchester youth sports, I'm writing to share my profound disappointment in the state of Colchester's athletic fields and to strongly request you consider investing in Colchester's youth and student athletes.

As you must be aware, Colchester is one of the only towns with its own high school in the state to not have a turf field anywhere in town. The field we do have at the high school, as well as the fields at the rec plex, are often deemed unsafe and entirely unplayable.

In 2019, the Bacon boy's varsity lacrosse team made it to the state championship game and finished second in the entire state, a huge accomplishment overshadowed by the fact that the boys were only allowed TWO HOME GAMES the entire season due to the horrendous condition of the high school football/ soccer/ lacrosse field.

This is obviously a longstanding problem, however the events of the last few weeks are a great example of how this issue impacts our students, our programs and our coaches.

The high school boys and girls lacrosse season began on March 19. While other teams were practicing on lined turf fields, the boys program paid $200 from its own booster club to rent 1 hour of field time from Wild World of Sports in Uncasville, while the girls team was forced to practice in the gym.

Since then, both teams have been forced to practice in the gym more often than outside. Of course, the game cannot be played effectively in a gymnasium, and recently we learned we are no longer allowed to practice inside with regulation balls. This is obviously a huge competitive disadvantage. When we can practice outside, we are forced to use a small field behind the middle school, which to this date, three weeks after the start of the season, is still not lined. The girls lacrosse coach painted a crease and field marking for one half of a field by himself. The game of lacrosse is very dependent on the lines of the field. The teams need to know the space and dimensions of the field markings to be ready for game scenarios. The midfield line itself is a line that tells the attack and defense where they have to stop or they will be offsides. Again, this is a huge competitive disadvantage and disheartening to our young players.

This past week, the boys lacrosse team practiced outside on the unlined field on Monday. On Tuesday, we won an away game. On Wednesday, we were forced to practice in the gym for just

one hour. On Thursday, we played a home game. The varsity won, however, due to some rain, the JV game was called off just after half time because the referees deemed the field UNPLAYABLE and a HUGE SAFETY HAZARD to our student athletes. These players, who devote countless hours to their sport, deserve a SAFE playing field.

On Friday, it was 65 degrees and sunny in Colchester. A beautiful day. The fields were deemed “unplayable.” We practiced inside, again, for one hour in the gym. Later in the day, I took my U10 youth team to Suffield’s high school, where we played on a beautiful turf field under the lights.

Today, with the exception of one 4-minute sprinkle shower, the sun has been shining. The varsity and JV games scheduled to be played by the boys lacrosse teams, at home, were canceled, due to field conditions.

Less you think this issue is only impacting our high school players, I assure you it is not. The Youth season began April 1. The town fields were not ready. The youth program arranged for the children to practice on the same unlined middle school field our older children are playing on. They practiced on Monday. Wednesday’s practices were canceled. Friday’s practices were canceled.

After the U10 game yesterday, my 17 young players were super excited about their upcoming home game on Wednesday. I don’t have the heart to tell them that in all likelihood, despite a good weather forecast, there’s a good chance that game will not happen.

Our players are dedicated to their sports. Their parents pay for them to play. They deserve better.

As a coach, I am trying to run top notch, positive, educational programs for these young boys, and my fellow coaches are doing the same for the girls. And yet we are not provided with the most basic of needs - a field to play on.

This community needs a turf field. It will benefit generations of Colchester children. It can be at the rec plex, the high school, anywhere in town.

Surely if so many other Connecticut towns can do it, we can, too.

I look forward to speaking with each and every one of you about how we can make this happen for our children.

Sincerely,
Brian Martin

Michael Dubreuil

To the Board of Education,
I am writing to inform you that I will not support any proposed education budget until the "Community Activism" curriculum is removed or majorly overhauled. The current curriculum is indoctrination to the Democratic Party for school credit.

As a citizen of Colchester I have limited powers. I have the power to vote for my representatives and I have the power to vote for budgets. The Colchester citizens overwhelmingly voted a slate of Republican candidates into positions of political leadership. I understand that this may not be "curriculum time" for the Board of Education; however, my powers as a citizen are limited to voting for a budget- and this budget will be voted down until the curriculum is changed. I will encourage like minded individuals to vote the education budget down until the curriculum issue is addressed. If you're a Republican- it's obvious, read the curriculum. If you're an independent or a Democrat- at least have the courtesy to your neighbors to not support a curriculum that goes against their values as parents.

I'm registered as an independent voter. I have problems with both Democrats and Republicans. I favor a balanced approach that will benefit the community. I saw a recent post on Facebook that said if you have a problem with what is taught in schools, then you should read the curriculum. I did. I found a largely non-controversial curriculum until I reached the section on "Community Activism". I fail to see how the Community Activism curriculum benefits the community or advances the educational learning of the students.

I would agree that this curriculum wasn't particularly controversial when it passed in 2010. However, through the lens of the last couple years it is deeply troubling. It talks about "social injustice" without definition, it uses Communist symbolism. It touches upon many of the Democratic Party's issues- while ignoring any of the Republic Party's. It's frankly the playbook of the current Democratic Party.

If you haven't recently read it, I would encourage you to do so. I would encourage the Board of Education to explain how this course is non-partisan and is intended to achieve an educational goal.

One of the alarming parts of the curriculum is "Media Mondays", an opportunity for the teacher to lead the class on a discussion of the latest news stories. This is troubling for two reasons:
A.) The course emphasizes the use of mainstream media news sources to discuss the current news. It has become clear that mainstream news has become propaganda mouthpieces for the Democratic Party. One needs to look no further than the Hunter Biden laptop story. Over a year ago this was originally reported as "fake news" and "Russian propaganda", recently the mainstream news has to sheepishly admit that it was all real.
B.) There was a recent Facebook post by a teacher at Bacon Academy that spread misinformation about Kyle Rittenhouse. When it was pointed out that she was entirely wrong on the facts she became indignant and said she felt "saddened by this town." That's the kind of

teacher who is absolutely scary leading this type of class. A teacher who's partisan activism prevents her from teaching the children on a neutral basis and actively undermines parents.

This budget simply can't pass with the Community Activism curriculum. It needs to be removed or heavily modified before it should be subject to a voter referendum. Colchester can't be "Kind" until it respects the views of all parents- and political indoctrination should have no part of it.

The curriculum can be viewed at:
https://www.colchesterct.org/departments/teaching_learning/curriculum

Thank you,
Michael Dubreuil
180 Woodbine Road

Tina Pappalardo

Good morning,

I am confirming the email I sent to you Jeff, regarding adding Julie Fetzer to the interview committee? She did not receive the email invitation to participate.

May I ask:
What is the duration of the posting?
How many applicants do we have currently?

It seems like a very short application period, being that the interviews will begin the first week of May. Is that correct?

Perhaps the Board of Education could consider a longer duration of application submissions so that there is ample time to collect, review and allow the position to be filled based on a quality candidate rather than a quick replacement.

This is something that the Parent advocacy group has been discussing.

Thank you for our inclusion in this process, it has been a very difficult time. We appreciate that you understand and hope that you agree that a search for the right candidate which can assist us all in moving forward in a positive,consistent, collaborative movement is essential.

Thank you so much. Enjoy the sunshine and Have a great day!

(Please forward this to Chris and any other BOE members I may have missed. I do not have his email.)

Respectfully,

Tina Pappalardo
Advocate
On behalf of the Colchester Parent Advocacy Group

Tina Pappalardo

Hello,

I do not have time at the moment to address in detail how the Parent group felt when they received this letter. I will say in breif,, that they feel betrayed and disgusted that the Superintendent, with full knowledge of the harm this person caused to families, students and educators would still provide a glowing recommendation letter. We cannot help think about all the future students and families who will be negatively impacted by her unethical practices that are supported in this letter by Jeffrey Burt.

On behalf of the Parent Group

Tina Pappalardo

Seamus McAvoy

To whom it may concern,

Under the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act § 1-200 et seq., I am requesting an opportunity to inspect or obtain any formal complaints filed against Superintendent Jeffrey Burt with the Colchester Board of Education between January 1, 2022 and February 28, 2022.

If there are any fees for searching or copying these records, please let me know. The Connecticut Freedom of Information Act requires a response within four business days. If access to the records I am requesting will take longer, please just let me know.

If you deny any or all of this request, please cite each specific exemption you feel justifies the refusal to release the information and notify me of the appeal procedures available to me under the law.

Thank you very much for your help.

Seamus McAvoy
Staff Reporter - The Hartford Courant

Lauren Beeler

Hello,

My name Lauren Beeler and I have 4 children in Colchester public Schools as well as I am currently finishing my 19th year of teaching in another district. As a parent and educator I am concerned about the recent resignations as I am sure most families are. I am URGING you to please consider an outside Interim Superintendent for the remainder of the year, someone to sort through the mess that has been made and start to pick up the pieces. We can not wait until July 1 to start fixing the system, our kids deserve better than that!

I am asking you to speak to Dr. Michael Graner for interim Superintendent. He recently retired as Superintendent of Groton Public Schools after 10 years there, he served as the Ledyard Superintendent the 10 years previous, Putnam Superintendent before that and started his Administrative career as the principal of Waterford High School. Dr. Graner has extensive experience in budgets (he recently built a new middle school, combining two schools to one), he works collaboratively with community leaders and has been teaching diversity workshops for thirty years. He has an IMPECCABLE record as a superintendent and his resume is so much more than I described. He may even know someone that could serve as the Interim SPED Director too.

Please I am asking you to strongly consider Dr. Graner as interim Superintendent!
If not him, please look for someone with experience at this level of administration. Someone that has run an entire school system before. Someone with the knowledge to start building CPS to be a better place for our children (particularly our SPED students), someone from the outside that is not tainted by rumors or what has happened.

I appreciate your time in this consideration.

Lauren Beeler